The Commonweal

July 4, 1947

Poetry and the Contemplative Life

Thomas Merton

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London Commentary

J. L. Benvenisti

The American from Epsom

John Broderick

VOLUME XLVI 15c NUMBER 12

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Rebuilding the World

IN THIS SUMMER of 1947, with the end of hostilities behind us for almost two years, the sad fact is that just about nothing has been accomplished toward rebuilding the world's economic life. The international organs originally established to accomplish this purpose—principally those elaborated at a place now strange in our ears, Bretton Woods—have flopped. The backward countries remain backward and the devastated countries remain devastated, and the goods, to start the machine are not in circulation.

Of course the problems involved are difficult. At their heart lies the problem of paying for, and accepting payment for, these goods. America can, of course, supply many of them. But America—especially the United States of America—has learned the folly of expecting to be paid for them in cash, both because the cash is unavailable and because, if it were available, we have learned that it does us less than no good to drain the gold or cash out of the rest of the world merely in order to have the pleasure of burying it in elaborate holes in the earth. Thus we are aware that the real choice which has always confronted us is between letting the rest of the world go hang—which we know we dare not do—making the rest of the world a free gift of the American goods it needs, or being willing ourselves ultimately to accept in payment the goods we shall enable the rest of the world to produce. The latter is obviously the healthier procedure, and in principle very many Americans—as witness recent public opinion polls—agree that it is. But the moment the specific interests of a specific group of Americans are even within the shadow of a threat of competition from imports, howls rise up, and Congress does things—such as the recent legislation on wool. The time may come when we shall accept in practice an export-*import* economy, and learn that a constantly favorable balance of trade can turn into a curse. Not yet. We still want to eat our cake and have it.

Probably if we do anything toward rebuilding the world economically, we shall do it (with appropriate kidding for the side-lines) on the basis of a gift. Then the question arises, as Mr. Arthur Krock has so cogently pointed out in a recent New York *Times*, as to just what this gift is going to cost us, Americans, in terms of the things of which we cannot produce enough to supply our own demand. How many less cars and refrigerators and washing machines shall we produce if we attempt to supply Europe's (and Asia's) minimal need for steel? How much shall we have to change our eating habits if we allay the pangs of other people's hunger? And if such sacrifices are needed, how will we go about it?

Mr. Krock quotes from Dean Acheson's speech at Cleveland, Mississippi, to show that some people in the Administration are thinking in terms of renewed government controls as the only practical way of dealing with the problem. Mr. Krock refers also to Mr. Hoover's method of solving the difficulty during World War I—by means of meatless and wheatless and gasless days. It is a question whether the public response to an appeal for voluntary belt-tightening would be anywhere near adequate to the magnitude of the task confronting us. In rough terms, to implement Secretary Marshall's plan for the economic rebuilding of Europe would be the equivalent of giving away a fifth of our national production, and if we do something of the same sort in Asia, the proportion would be quite a bit more. It may conceivably be true that our productive plant can turn out, let us say, one hundred and fifty percent of our own demands.

What is badly needed, as Mr. Krock points out, is a careful estimate of just what the carrying out of the Marshall plan—or any other plan—would cost us, as American men and women. There is a better chance that we shall accept whatever burdens would fall upon us if we know them be-

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forehand than if we have no more than a vague feeling that we cannot buy that new ice-box because we are sending all our stuff out of the country to help a lot of thankless foreigners.

Right to Veto?

THE TEST of an American's belief in civil liberties comes whenever he has anything to say about allowing agitation for something which he violently opposes. So, too, loyalty to our political tradition—with its provisions for the expression of majority opinion and its checks and balances—can be gauged by a man's willingness to abide by the clearly established rules. The failure of Mr. Truman's most vehement adversaries on the Tax and Labor Bills to live up to established tradition has been the most startling aspect of the controversies of the past few weeks.

It is one thing to fight for what you believe in, quite another to seek to change the rules. Curiously enough it was Mr. Truman's unsustained veto which called down cries of rage on the part of a sizable list of members of Congress, editorial writers, radio commentators and columnists, rather than his effective veto. It was actually proposed in Congress that a presidential veto should be susceptible to a simple majority vote.

In the condemnation of the President for exercising his veto right in these two instances all sorts of allegations have been made. He was simply playing politics. He was ignoring the mandate of last November. He was forgetting his promise to play ball. And now that the Taft-Hartley Bill is a law in spite of the Truman opposition, he can surely be expected to sabotage it. Partisanship can hardly go farther.

There is one further stage in this business where changing the rules for fear of not otherwise winning may come into play. Union labor is sure to stage some test cases on certain provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act. The object will be to bring these cases to the United States Supreme Court. It is not at all certain from this point of vantage just how the present Court will rule as to the constitutionality of some of the provisions. Where there is a negative decision what rule-changes will the extreme Taft-Hartley advocates call for then?

The Stratton Bill

DURING the two years since the war ended in Europe we have been learning, as a nation, something which people of considerable means, as individuals, have known for some time—that having a lot of money is very uncomfortable, and that no amount of overt and regular generosity will enable one, as long as his money holds out, to shed the discomfort. This country, like any rich man, has quite recently found out that it is not pure fun to be rich. It might have been thrilling in 1925, for example, when everyone was doing fairly well and the United States was merely doing a little better. But in 1947, the United States, all alone, is stranded with the overwhelming burden of the big money.

We have always known, of course—even between 1940 and 1945—that we were not likely to get into any real financial trouble. Still, it was quite a surprise to find that we had so much and that everyone else had so little, and it was an even greater shock to hear our oldest European friends go right on murmuring, in spite of the generosities we planned for them.

For a while, the nation as a whole reacted as had the disgruntled American soldiers who participated in the liberation of France. We were not able—as the soldiers were—to clout a few French cafe owners as a sign of our dissatisfaction over their failure to show adequate appreciation of what we had accomplished for them and for their nation. But we took our soreness out in other ways. We indulged in a rather prolonged moment of self-righteousness. We were, for a few months, inclined to do only the necessary for an ungrateful Europe. In writing, or by osmosis, we transmitted this huffiness to our legislators, and the result has been a delayed attack on some of the most demanding problems of European recovery. It has surely been one of the telling reasons for our dragging approach to a solution of the agonizing condition of Europe's displaced persons. The misery of the displaced persons has been one of the most prominent features of the European landscape for two years, but it is only within the past few weeks that a bill (the Stratton Bill) which is aimed directly at the problem has received serious legislative attention.

The Stratton Bill is such a limited demonstration of American generosity that one can only be amazed at its slow rate of formulation and the fact that it is opposed at all. The bill, an emergency measure, proposes merely that our normal immigration quotas regarding certain European nations be withdrawn for the next four years in order to permit some 400,000 displaced persons to take up residence in this country, at the rate of 100,000 persons each year. The provisions of the bill sound even less revolutionary when one realizes that our immigration quotas went by default during the war years.

Letter-writing to Congressmen has not always proved to be the most productive way to make use of the mails, but in this instance it seems worthwhile to suggest that, when the Stratton Bill is presented for vote, a few letters of assurance to reluctant Congressmen might be a good thing. Perhaps the Congressmen would feel more at ease about their votes on the Stratton Bill if they were told that the American people have passed through their period of injured feelings and are quite willing to take up the rich man's burden, no praise solicited.

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Good Union Relations

WHAT can be accomplished when responsible unions and enlightened management collaborate for their mutual benefit and in the public interest cannot be signalized too often. That is the point of citing the first meeting since the war of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, at Cleveland the latter part of June. This is an AFL union, forty-seven years old, in an industry made up of a number of comparatively small firms; it numbers 400,000 members. David Dubinsky reports that as of current date the union's general funds have surpassed the twenty million mark, while there is an additional twenty-six millions earmarked for the membership's health and welfare funds and death benefits. During the three years which have elapsed since the last ILGWU convention the union has contributed over nine millions to labor, philanthropy and war relief. For its members the union has achieved an hourly average wage rate of $2.13; for management it has continued to demonstrate fidelity to agreements. ILGWU members also have at their disposal a remarkable range of recreational and educational facilities; problems of the industry are solved through the joint consultation of union leaders and the employers' association. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, CIO, has just published a report of its finances and its activities. Because of the wage differential in the two industries, there is a certain area in which the ILGWU and ACWA are at present rivals. But the two unions and the employers with whom they deal continue to demonstrate a degree of union-management maturity which should be the consistent aim of other American industries.

Arms for Latin-America

TWO WEEKS ago this magazine ran a piece entitled "Gun Runners" which opposed the plan to furnish American military equipment to South American countries and which concluded that in doing so our nation "the arsenal of democracy in time of war becomes a munition shop in time of peace—a munition shop of obsolete weapons." It appears now that this definition was incomplete. We were thinking of a shop filled with halberds, cross bows, battle axes, a Parrot gun of the Civil War, a French 75 of 1914, trophies galore from the war that is just finished—with bugles also for sale. But we should have remembered that this is the country which practically gives away the razor, in order to sell the blade, the camera, in order to sell the film, the paper cup dispenser in order to sell the paper cup—our idea of the shop itself was obsolete; it is the servicing that pays.

So that the plan for the Latin American countries is not just to sell them $10,000,000 military equipment a year; it provides for scientific commercial development. "The Secretary of War was represented as having emphasized the *military* point [italics ours] that those who provided the initial equipment would have the privilege of supplying replacements and making repairs."

This commercial, or if Mr. Patterson insists, this military thought for the week is quoted from Mr. C. P. Trussell's long and extremely complicated dispatch from Washington to the New York *Times,* June 24. Mr. Trussell reports a session of the House Foreign Affairs Committee at which the Secretary of State and the Secretary of War urged prompt congressional authorization for military aid to Latin American countries.

As usual in Washington there appeared the inevitable Congressman to ask embarrassing questions. This time it was Representative Mike Mansfield, Democrat, of Montana, who inquired of Mr. Marshall how it was that even since he had been Secretary of State there had been a long communication, signed by Dean Acheson, from the State Department to the War and Navy Departments objecting to the plan. Mr. Marshall said that he did not think it would be in the interest of the best relations with Latin America to enter this communication into the open record. It then developed that "virtually the whole correspondence had been disclosed in an April supplement to *Human Events.*"

From then on, the House Committee discussed the State Department letter as if it existed. But since it only exists in an unauthorized version Mr. Trussell is obliged to preface his quotes with "it appears," "it is represented," and so forth.

And so it is alleged that the Acheson letter said:

> Encouragement of expenditures on arms by the Latin-American countries runs directly counter to our basic economic and political policies which aim to encourage an improvement in the living standards and economic welfare of those countries. The sacrifices which all of the Latin-American countries would be requested to make under the proposed program would drastically limit their effectuation of plans for industrialization, improvement of transportation, production of strategic materials needed by the United States, and correction of presently poor conditions of public health, education and social welfare.

And it is extremely painful to record that "Mr. Patterson's reply, it appears, was to this effect:"

> That few Latin-American republics, regardless of their financial position, could hope to hold their own without armaments. This, it was implied, was because dictatorships largely prevailed in Latin America. From this premise, it was deduced that the dictatorships would get arms, necessary to their continuance, somewhere—anywhere. The implication appeared to be that Russia was the potential source.

Whether they get the arms from Russia or from us, the fact remains that they should not get them from anyone. Instead of getting them from "somewhere—anywhere"—we should see that they do not get them at all.

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London Commentary

J. L. Benvenisti

THE BRITISH Labor Party has just delivered itself of one of the ablest pieces of pleading that I have seen for a very long time. It is called "Cards on the Table" and is a defense of Mr. Bevin's foreign policy. As a dialectical feat this publication, which, by the way, is a party and not a government publication, is all the more remarkable because the case which it sets out to defend is extremely wobbly.

Broadly speaking, the argument is that though the Russians are not very nice to know and are most regrettably addicted to telling lies, they have, nevertheless, hearts of gold, if we only knew it, and we must go on trying to be kind though firm with them until they see that honesty and co-operation is the best policy.

Now, I do not as a matter of fact wish to quarrel with these sentiments. Heaven knows, people over here have every reason to keep away from trouble, and if there is even the faintest glimmer of hope of the Russians behaving like rational beings, I am all for patience and moderation. What I find so puzzling is the thing that is to happen after we have once got them to see a little sense.

On the negative side the program seems, at first sight, clear enough. The writer inveighs vehemently against the Machiavellian wickedness of Churchill in wanting an Anglo-American alliance "directed against Russia." But it is when we come to the positive proposals that the whole thing becomes a little confusing, for we are urged to bring about "an alliance with Stalin which will associate Britain as closely with Russia as with the United States." Obviously, the idea is that Britain is somehow to play the old balance of power game between Russia and America, and make war impossible by threatening to throw its weight against whichever resorts to aggression.

Unfortunately, this is not quite the way it works out, because on the pamphlet's own showing "Britain could not under any circumstances adopt a policy which might lead her to war against America since she could be starved to death in a few weeks by the American fleet." If that is so, that is to say, Britain "could not in any circumstances adopt a policy which might lead her to war against America," one is tempted to ask what the point of a proposed Russian alliance is supposed to be. Against what is Britain supposed to be ready to defend her ally? Against an attack by Eskimos, presumably.

The author of the pamphlet appears not to be altogether insensible to this anomaly, for it seems that what he has in mind is a kind of negative alliance. Britain, we are told, plays a decisive part in the defense of American security and it is therefore impossible for America to adopt a policy of world aggression without British agreement. "The nature of the military cooperation between America and Britain makes it impossible for either to fight if the other remains neutral." So Britain, that is the argument, can effectively keep world peace simply by giving America an undertaking to cooperate with her against a Russian attack and by refusing to cooperate with her in any aggression against that country.

Now that would also be a very intelligent policy if its main premise were true—I mean that bit about neither Britain nor America being able to fight without the other.

Unfortunately, I don't believe it is true at all. I don't believe that it is by any means technically impossible for America to commence military operations against Russia without British cooperation; nor do I believe that she would necessarily be acting wickedly if she did. We are surely by now out of the infant stage, where we believe that taking the military initiative in itself constitutes aggression. America might quite well do this, and still plead with perfect sincerity (even if Britain might at first not see it that way) that she was not the aggressor but the aggressor's victim, and was seeking to defend her very life.

However, whatever might be the morality of the supposed American action, one thing is certain. Once the shooting started, Britain would certainly get involved, and since it is, as the pamphlet admits, inconceivable that we should side against her, it is obvious that once war broke out we should, however much we disliked the idea, be in on America's side. That is the plain reality of the matter, and everything else is just tall talk.

Now surely, one might argue, it is only commonsense and good statesmanship to face up to these international facts of life, instead of spinning out an elaborate rigmarole of alliances and counter alliances based on the supposition that we here in Britain move in an independent orbit of our own. Surely, it will be said, we should now be talking of the one thing only that really matters, which is common Anglo-American defense.

Unfortunately, it is not quite so simple as that, nor are the apparent contradictions of the pam-

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phlet to be understood merely as an attempt to build an inconstructable bridge between Mr. Bevin and a few mild Russophiles in the Labor Left Wing. Ideologies and the doctrine of "Russia can't be wrong" have precious little to do with the matter, and indeed in a previous pamphlet issued by Mr. Crossman and a handful of other Labor rebels there was plenty of criticism of Russia. What is here weighing in the balance is a deep and instinctive consciousness of peril.

I think that although America seems to put out more publicity than does this country about the effect of the atomic bomb, people over here feel these possibilities more in their bones. Geographical proximity does make a difference, both in our feeling and in fact. We most of us know that there is a 90 percent chance of Britain's complete annihilation in a future war, whichever side is victorious, and that makes most of us readier than the general run of men in America for any kind of accommodation with Russia that is not wholly incompatible with reason and honor. Hence, almost any suggestion, however unrealistic or absurd, can get a hearing if it affords even the most remote possibility of a decent understanding with the Soviet.

★

Can you blame us for this? A recent writer on the nature of a future war and of the effects of atomic bombs, bacteriological warfare and the rest, stated with considerable accuracy that "The whole combination is designed to paralyze the enemy population and leave it, like a man abandoned with a broken spine, to rot and starve in the ruins which it would be death for the victors themselves to enter." That is the kind of peril to which not only our proximity but also our restricted geographical area makes us particularly exposed. It is surely no imputation on Britain's courage that she should be searching almost frantically for any means of avoiding it.

Apart from bacteria and bombs, our present malaise is further enhanced by the knowledge that our current defense commitments are hopelessly beyond our strength, that they are ruining us economically, and that the sharing of the burden between ourselves and the United States is quite abominably inequitable.

The author of the pamphlet seems not to be unaware of this, for he goes out of his way to defend existing arrangements. "We can only be grateful," he writes, "if America is prepared in any way to make it easier for us to defend our country." (Please note the "our country," though British troops stationed all over the world are defending American interests quite as much as British.) "So the gibe that America provides the money while we provide the men is simply answered, for that suits us better than providing both the men and the money."

Unfortunately, you cannot distinguish between men and money in this way. The crippling burden of peacetime military service is withdrawing vast numbers of men from productive industry, and must inevitably lower our national income. Money and men are in this connection only two different aspects of the same thing, and we have an uneasy feeling that when the numbers and economic potential of the two countries are taken into account we are providing rather more men than the Americans are providing money, though we know very well that the Americans are providing a great deal of money.

Despite all this, there is for the moment no question of any weakening in Anglo-American solidarity. On the contrary, it grows stronger every day. Unfortunately, however, this is mainly due to the stupidity of the Soviet government.

There are, of course, other factors which influence us, ties of sentiment, common economic interest, and the like, and I have already said that if it came to a show-down there can be no doubt whatever where Britain would be found. However, we are not dealing with a show-down at the moment, but with the intermediate phase of diplomatic maneuver, and in that particular phase the common front between Britain and the United States is very largely held together by Russian diplomatic ineptitude.

This raises a very serious problem. What would happen if the Russian Government were suddenly to turn over a new leaf? I am not asking what would happen if that government were to become genuinely reasonable and cooperative. Presumably that would be as welcome to America as to anybody else. But supposing it were merely to go through the motions of being reasonable and cooperative? It is admittedly not very likely that the Stalinists will do anything of the kind, but they might. Russia might, in a sort of fit of absentmindedness, move a few inches towards a fair compromise on the German problem. She might, for a period at least, refrain from discovering any new plots against the state in Eastern Europe. She might even suddenly and quite unaccountably stop telling lies.

I think that the effect of this would be a far stronger swing-over of British sympathies towards Russia than may perhaps be realized on your side of the water. The fact is, I fear, that we are almost burningly anxious to be deceived, and I do not doubt that the Russians would succeed in deceiving us the moment they thought it worth their while to make the attempt.

These being the facts of the matter, may I suggest, I hope without impertinence, that certain things be done to strengthen the partnership which in the ultimate event must be inevitable, but which might nevertheless be in danger of a

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temporary disruption. The first of these necessary things is, as I have already pointed out, a more equitable sharing of the burden of common defense. Next, I would suggest that a certain circumspection be exercised by highly placed Americans in some of their utterances. The following, for instance, in *The New Statesman,* is hardly very encouraging to a prospective ally:

"Some months ago an American General observed to an R.A.F. officer who was escorting him on a tour of inspection that Britain was not much good to the American Army but might provide one or two useful air bases. Last week Members of Congress during their consideration of the loans to Greece and Turkey, were told that Britain has a little more importance after all. The military view presented to them by the American Chiefs of Staff was that America cannot hope to defeat Russia in the next war without the use of Britain as an 'atom absorber.' "

Finally, I do heartily wish that the American press would be more careful in avoiding misleading, exaggerated and even untrue statements about Russia, particularly when those statements can be very easily exposed. The facts about Russia are quite bad enough, and to represent them as worse than they actually are gives a disquieting impression of war-mongering. Anyway, journalistic distortion is a prescriptive Russian right, and Americans have no business to invade it.

A few weeks ago there appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* an article dealing with the problem of Germany and the Polish frontier, and a long speech purporting to have been made by Mr. Bevin was quoted. In this speech the British Foreign Minister is reported to have said that, as a result of the new Polish frontier on the Oder, 13 million people had already been driven westward on the day he took office two years ago.

Now, in the first place, the speech attributed to Mr. Bevin was certainly not made in the form in which it was reproduced. Bits of it come out of a speech he made in the House of Commons on the 22nd October of last year, while other bits were not contained in that speech at all, or, as far as I have been able to discover, in any other speech. Certainly that bit about the 13 millions was not contained in that speech, and I should rather like to know when Mr. Bevin did mention this figure, since neither I nor the Foreign Office Press Service can find any such utterance.

All that I have been able to find is a speech delivered in the House of Commons in 1945 in which Mr. Bevin rebuked Mr. Churchill for his supposed statement (which Churchill repudiated) that 8 or 9 millions had been expelled, saying the total German population census in the district in question only amounted to about that figure. It does seem a little odd that on one occasion Mr. Bevin should go out of his way to state that the figure of 8 millions was exaggerated, and a little later on say that the real figure was 13 millions. The correct figure of expulsions from this area is, in point of fact, about 4 millions, which is quite bad enough; but 4 millions is not 13 millions.

Now, this kind of thing is giving us the jitters. We are beginning to feel there is a great deal more to this talk of a "preventive war" than appears on the surface, and we do not want a war, preventive or any other. We do not fancy our rôle of an "atom absorber." If the thing comes, then well and good. I do not believe Britain will acquit herself less heroically than she has done in the past. If there is no alternative but to go down fighting, she will go down fighting. But, *pace* the Curtis Publishing Company, she has an excusable preference for seeking the maximum postponement of that event.

Poetry and the Contemplative Life

Thomas Merton

THE TERM "contemplative life" is one that is much mistreated. It is more often used than defined, and that is why arguments about the respective merits of "active" and "contemplative" orders generally end nowhere. In the present article I am not talking about the contemplative orders, but about the contemplative life. It is a life that can be led and, in fact, must eventually be led by every good Christian. It is the life for which we were created, and which will eventually be our everlasting joy in heaven. By the grace of Christ we can begin to lead that life even on earth, and many in fact do so begin. Some of them are in cloisters, because the vows and rules of religious orders and congregations make the necessary work of preparation easy and, as it were, almost a matter of course. But many more "contemplatives" are out in the world. A lot of them may be found in places like Harlem and wherever people suffer, and perhaps many of

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these have never even heard the word "contemplative." And yet, on the other hand, not all of those who are in contemplative orders are contemplatives. Through their own fault they miss the end of their vocation.

The contemplative life is a life entirely occupied with God—with love and knowledge of God. It can be considered from three points of view, as it were in three degrees. There is first of all possible a kind of natural contemplation of God—that of the artist, the philosopher, and of the most advanced pagan religions. Then there is the contemplative life in the usual sense of the word: a life in which a baptized Christian, making full use of all the means which the Church puts at his disposal—Sacraments, Liturgy, penance, prayer, meditation, spiritual reading and so on—strives to conform his will with God's will and to see and love God in all things and thus to dispose himself for union with Him. This is *active* contemplation, in which grace indeed is the principle of all the supernatural value and ordination of our acts, but in which much of the initiative belongs to our own powers, prompted and sustained by grace. This form of the contemplative life prepares us for contemplation properly so called: the life of *infused* or *passive* or *mystical* contemplation.

Infused contemplation is nothing but the fulness of the Christian life—the flowering of grace and the gifts and beatitudes which perfect the work of the three theological virtues.

Far from being something esoteric and dangerous, infused contemplation is given us as the normal term of the Christian life even on earth. *Omnis qui ad Dominum convertitur contemplativam vitam desiderat* said Saint Gregory the Great and he was using contemplation in our sense: to live on the desire of God alone; to have one's mind divested of all earthly things and united, in so far as human weakness permits, with Christ. And he adds that the contemplative life begins on earth in order to continue, more perfectly, in heaven. Saint Thomas echoed him with his famous phrase: *quaedam inchoatio beatitudinis.* Saint Bonaventure goes farther than any of the other Doctors of the Church in his insistence that all Christians should desire infused contemplation. And in his second conference on the Hexaemeron, applying Christ's words in Matthew xii, 42, he says that the Queen of the South who left her own land and traveled far to hear the wisdom of Solomon will rise up in judgment against our generation which refuses the treasures of infused wisdom, preferring the far lesser riches of worldly wisdom and philosophy.

Infused contemplation is an experimental knowledge of God's goodness "tasted" and "possessed" by a vital contact in the depths of the soul. By infused love, we are given an immediate grasp of God's own substance, and rest in the obscure and profound sense of His presence and transcendent actions within our inmost selves, yielding ourselves altogether to the work of His transforming Spirit.

Now whether we speak of contemplation as active or passive, one thing is evident: it brings us into the closest contact with the one subject matter that is truly worthy of a Christian poet: God as He is seen by faith, by revelation, or in the intimate experience of the soul illumined by the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Consider, for instance, what a tremendous mine of literary inspiration is in the liturgical life. The liturgy itself contains the greatest literature, not only from Scripture, but from the genius of the Patristic and Middle Ages. The liturgy stands at the crossroads of the natural and supernatural lives, and exploits all the possibilities of both in order to bring out every possible meaning and implication that is in them with respect to our salvation and the praise of God. It surrounds those founts of all supernatural vitality, the Sacraments, with a music that is perfect in its dignity, and ceremonies that are most meaningful by reason of their tremendous dramatic simplicity, not to mention all the resources of pictorial and plastic art still unknown in this land which has never yet possessed a Chartres or an Assisi.

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The liturgy is, then, not only a school of literary taste and a mine of marvelous subjects, but it is infinitely more: it is a great sacramental built around the six Sacraments which surround the greatest Sacrament Who is Christ Himself dwelling among us even unto the consummation of the world.

Christ on the Cross is the fount of all art because He is the Word, the fount of all grace and wisdom. He is the center of everything, of the whole economy of the natural and supernatural orders. Everything points to this anointed King of Creation Who is the splendor of the eternal light and the mirror of the Godhead without stain. He is the "image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature . . . in Him were all things created, by Him and in Him . . . He is before all and by Him all things consist . . . in Whom it hath pleased the Father that all things should dwell . . . for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally," that in all things He may hold the primacy. (Colossians, i and ii)

And yet Catholic poets and writers generally, although they might possess the key to these treasures through a love of Christ that would not shrink from the self-denial required to live a complete and integral Christian life in defiance of the standards of comfort-loving American material-

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ism, prefer to struggle along in the wake of indifferent and mediocre secular models, singing the same old cracked tune that the Georgians inherited from Tennyson and Swinburne and of which even the children of our modern world have long since grown tired.

Of course, it is no wonder that we can't all live like a Saint John of the Cross. But we might at least *read* him! He is one of the greatest Catholic poets. How many Catholics have even heard of him? And yet every time you open a Catholic anthology you will come across something by Alexander Pope who was baptized a Catholic, indeed, and died one, but who *wrote* as a deist. Contemplation would at least open our eyes to the value of our own tradition, even if we did not have the courage to follow our models to the limit in order to come somewhere near the intensity and perfection of their writing.

No Christian poetry worthy of the name has been written by anyone who was not in some degree a contemplative. But that does not mean that every contemplative is necessarily a great poet. Poetry is an art, a natural skill, a virtue of the practical intellect, and no matter how great a subject we may have in the experience of infused contemplation, we will not be able to put it into words if we do not have the proper command of our medium. That is true. But let us assume that a man already has this natural gift. If the inspiration is helpless without a correspondingly effective technique, technique is barren without inspiration.

Christ is our inspiration, and Christ is at the center of the contemplative life. Therefore, it would seem fairly evident that the one thing that will most contribute to the perfection of Catholic literature in general and poetry in particular will be for our writers and poets to start leading lives of active contemplation. In other words, to lead the full Christian life in so far as they can in their state. That means not necessarily entering a monastery, but aspiring to perfection by the use of all the manifold means that the Church puts at our disposal. It means a solid integration of one's work and religion and family life and recreations in one vital harmonious unity with Christ at its center. The liturgical life is the most obvious example, but it is hard enough to find a parish where the liturgical life is anything more than a bare skeleton. Nevertheless, any man or woman in the world who wants to can make a very fair attempt at becoming an active contemplative and even dispose himself for the graces of infused prayer. And the best disposition is an efficacious desire to arrive at a deep and intimate and personal and loving knowledge of God through Christ.

If such a desire is efficacious, it will not shrink from facts and penance and sacrifices; it will seek them. It will not be bored with prayer, but prayer will become the life of our soul, and we will be able to carry on affective prayer everywhere. We will read Scripture and above all the contemplative saints—John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, John Ruysbroeck, Bonaventure, and so on. And God will not make too many difficulties about giving us His wisdom. . . .

It is obvious, then, that contemplation has much to offer poetry. But can poetry offer anything, in return, to contemplation? Can the poetic sense help us towards infused contemplation, and, if so, how far along the way?

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We have said that the poetic sense may be a *remote* disposition for mystical prayer. This needs explanation. And the first thing that needs to be stressed is the essential dignity of esthetic experience. It is, in itself, a very high gift, though only in the natural order. It is a gift which very many people have never received, and which others, having received it, have allowed to spoil or become atrophied within them through neglect and misuse.

To many people, the enjoyment of art is nothing more than a sensible and emotional thrill. They look at a picture, and if it stimulates one or another of their sense-appetites they are pleased. On a hot day they like to look at a picture of mountains or the sea because it makes them feel cool. They like paintings of dogs that you could almost pat. But naturally they soon tire of art, under those circumstances. They turn aside to pat a real dog, or they go down the street to an air-conditioned movie, to give their senses another series of jolts. Obviously for such people art is not even a remote preparation for even the lowest degree of contemplation.

But a genuine esthetic experience is something which transcends not only the sensible order (in which, however, it has its beginning) but also that of reason itself. It is a supra-rational intuition of the latent perfection of things. Its immediacy outruns the speed of reasoning and leaves all analysis far behind. In the natural order, as Jacques Maritain has often insisted, it is an analogue of the mystical experience which it resembles and imitates from afar. Its mode of apprehension is that of "connaturality"—it reaches out to grasp the inner reality, the vital substance of its object, by a kind of affective identification of itself with it. It rests in the perfection of things by a kind of union which somewhat resembles the rest of the soul in its immediate, affective contact with God in the obscurity of mystical prayer. A true artist can contemplate a picture for hours, and it is a real contemplation, too. So close is the resemblance between these two experiences that a poet like Blake could almost confuse the two and

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make them merge into one another as if they belonged to the same order of things. And yet there is an abyss between them.

Nowhere has this resemblance between the experiences of the artist and of the mystic been better treated than in the long and important article on "Art and Spirituality," by Fr. M. Leonard, S.J., in the "Dictionnaire de Spiritualité." This theologian stresses the dignity of the esthetic intuition practically to the limit. He gives it everything that it is ontologically able to stand. He insists that the highest experience of the artist penetrates not only beyond the sensible surface of things into their inmost reality, but even beyond that to God Himself. More than that, the analogy with mystical experience is deeper and closer still because, as he says, the intuition of the artist sets in motion the very same psychological processes which accompany infused contemplation. This would seem to be too much: but no, it is not. It fits in with the psychology of Saint Augustine and Saint Bonaventure and the latter's notion of contemplation *per speculum,* passing through the mirror of created things to God, even if that mirror may happen to be our own soul.

The Augustinian psychology, which forms the traditional substratum of Christian mystical theology, distinguishes between an *inferior* and *superior* soul. Of course, this is only a manner of speaking. There is only one soul, a simple spiritual substance, undivided and indivisible. And yet the soul in so far as it acts through its faculties, making decisions and practical judgments concerning temporal external things, is called "inferior." The "superior" soul is the same soul, but now considered as the principle or *actus primus* of these other diverse and multiple acts of the faculties which as it were flow from this inner principle. Only the superior soul is strictly the image of God within us. And if we are to contemplate God at all, this internal image must be re-formed by grace, and then we must enter within ourselves by recollection, withdrawing our faculties from external things into this inner sanctuary which is the substance of the soul itself. The majority of people, even those who possess the gift of sanctifying grace, never enter into this inward self, which is an abode of silence and peace and where the diversified activities of the intellect and will are collected, so to speak, into one intense and smooth and spiritualized activity which far exceeds in its fruitfulness the plodding efforts of reason working on external reality with its analyses and syllogisms.

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It is here that contemplation really begins. It is into this substance or "center" of the soul, when it is suitably purified of images and attachments to sensible things, that the obscure light of infused contemplation will be poured by God, giving us experimental contact with Himself without the medium of sense species, which are, in any case, utterly incapable of apprehending Him.

And yet even in the natural order, without attaining to God in us, the esthetic experience introduces us into this interior sanctuary of the soul and to its inexpressible simplicity and economy and energy and fruitfulness.

Obviously, then, when the natural contemplation of the artist or the metaphysician has already given a man a taste of the peaceful intoxication which is tasted in the supra-rational intuitions of this interior self, the way is already well prepared for infused contemplation. And if God should grant that grace, the person so favored will be much better prepared to recognize it, and to cooperate with God's action within him. And this, as a matter of fact, is a tremendous advantage. The artist, the poet, the metaphysician is, then, in some sense already naturally prepared and disposed to remove some of the principal obstacles to the light of infused contemplation. He will be less tempted than the ordinary man to reach out for sensible satisfactions and imaginable thrills. He will be more ready to keep himself detached from the level of feeling and emotionalism which so easily make the devotion of less wary souls degenerate into sentimentality. The mere fact of the artist's or poet's good taste, which should belong to him by virtue of his art, will help him to avoid some of the evils that tend to corrupt religious experience before it has a chance to take root and grow in the soul.

If only we realized how much the work of the Holy Ghost is impeded in our souls by our insatiable emotional vulgarity—a vulgarity which we innocently bring with us into the House of God and coddle next to our heart our whole life long, never suspecting that it is a dead and poisoned thing. And the saddest of all is that this domestic enemy is nourished and encouraged by so much of the so-called pious "art" that infects the atmosphere of the Church in so many quarters. If there were no other proof of the infinite patience of God with men, a very good one could be found in His toleration of the pictures that are painted of Him and of the noise that proceeds from musical instruments under the pretext of being in His "honor."

Mystical contemplation is absolutely beyond the reach of man's activity. There is nothing he can do to obtain it by himself. It is a pure gift of God. God gives it to whom He wills, when He wills, and in the way and degree in which He wills. By cooperating with the work of ordinary grace we can—and, if we really mean to love God, we must—constantly grow and progress in charity and union with Him by our good works. But

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no amount of generosity on our part, no amount of effort, no amount of sacrifice will necessarily and immediately gain us progress in mystical prayer. That is a work that must be done by God acting as the "principal agent" (the term is that of Saint John of the Cross). If He is the principal agent, there is another agent: ourselves. But our part is simply to consent and to receive, and all the rest that we can do amounts to the more or less negative task of avoiding the obstacles to God's action, and keeping our own selfishness and sensuality out of His way. Saint Bonaventure tells us in many places that prayer and ardent desire can persuade God to give us this gift, and that *"industria"* on our part can open the way for His action. The term *industria* stands for active purification, and Saint Bonaventure means, by that, precisely the same thing that Saint John of the Cross talks about all through the "Ascent of Mount Carmel," namely the voiding and emptying of the soul, clearing it of all images, all likenesses of and attachments to created things so that it may be clean and pure to receive the obscure light of God's own presence. The soul must be stripped of all its desires for natural satisfactions, no matter how high, how noble or how excellent in themselves. As long as it rests in creatures, it cannot possess God and be possessed by Him, for the love of the soul for creatures is darkness in the sight of God. If we love created things and depend on them and trust in them rather than in God, it will be once again a case of God's light shining in the darkness, "and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John i. 5.)

There is no need to insist on this, since it is the common doctrine of Christian mystical theologians. The one big obstacle to "unitive" or "connatural" or "affective" knowledge of God by infused contemplation (the terms are those of Saint Thomas and his followers) is attachment to human reasoning and analysis and discourse that proceeds by abstraction from sense images, and by syllogizing, to conclusions. In other words, a man cannot at the same time fly in an airplane and walk along the ground. He must do one or the other. And if he insists on walking along the ground—all right, it is no sin. But it will take him much longer and cost him much more effort to get to his destination, and he will have a much more limited view of things along his way. And the even greater obstacle to union with God by pure and infused love, or wisdom, is love of one's own satisfactions, attachment to one's own pleasure, the desire to rest in one's own achievements and in the work of one's own powers and will. If God is to do the work of infusing contemplation into our souls, we must not be busy with our own natural activity, which, *ipso facto*, excludes and prevents this complete freedom of action which God demands in us. All He wants from the mystic is cooperation, peaceful consent, and a blind trust in Him: for all this time, since the soul does not act, it remains blind and in darkness, having no idea where it is going or what is being done, and tasting satisfaction that is, at first, extremely tenuous and ineffable and obscure. The reason is, of course, that the soul is not yet sufficiently spiritualized to be able to grasp and appreciate what is going on within it. It remains with nothing but the vaguest and most general sense that God is really and truly present and working there—a sense which is fraught with a greater certitude than anything it has ever experienced before. And yet if we stop to analyze the experience, or if we make a move to increase its intensity by a natural act, the whole thing will evade our grasp and we may lose it altogether.

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Now it is precisely here that the esthetic instinct changes its colors and, from being a precious gift becomes a *fatal handicap*. If the intuition of the poet naturally leads him into the inner sanctuary of his soul, it is for a special purpose in the natural order: when the poet enters into himself, it is in order to reflect upon his inspiration and to clothe it with a special and splendid form and then return to *display it to those outside*. And here the radical difference between the artist and the mystic begins to be seen. The artist enters into himself in order to *work*. For him, the "superior" soul is a forge where inspiration kindles a fire of white heat, a crucible for the transformation of natural images into new, created forms. But the mystic enters into himself, not in order to work but to pass through the center of his own soul and lose himself in the mystery and secrecy and infinite, transcendent reality of God living and working within him.

Consequently, if the mystic happens to be, at the same time, an artist, when prayer calls him within himself to the secrecy of God's presence, his art will be tempted to start working and producing and studying the "creative" possibilities of this experience. And therefore immediately the whole thing runs the risk of being frustrated and destroyed. The artist will be cheated of a gift of tremendous and supernatural worth, and be left with nothing — but the experience of an artist. And instead of passing through the sanctuary of his own soul into the abyss of the infinite actuality of God Himself, he will remain there a moment, only to emerge again into the exterior world of multiple created things whose variety once more dissipates his energies until they are lost in perplexity and dissatisfaction.

There is, therefore, a tremendous danger that one who has the natural gift of artistic intuition and creation will be constantly cheated of the infinitely superior gift of the union of the soul

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with God which surpasses all understanding. He may well receive the first taste of infused prayer, for, as Saint John of the Cross says, that is granted to relatively many souls, and often quite soon in their spiritual life, especially in a monastery: but, because of this tragic promethean tendency to exploit every experience as material for "creation" he may remain there all his life on the threshold, never entering in to the banquet, but always running back into the street to tell the passers by of the wonderful music he has heard coming from the inside of the palace of the King!

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What, then, is the conclusion? That poetry can, indeed, help to bring us rapidly through that part of the journey to contemplation that is called active: but when we are entering the realm of true contemplation, where eternal happiness begins, it may turn around and bar our way.

In such an event, there is only one course for the poet to take, for his own individual sanctification: the *ruthless and complete sacrifice of his art.* This is the simplest and the safest and the most obvious way—and one which will only appeal to someone who does not realize the infinite distance between the gifts of nature and those of grace, between the natural and the supernatural order, time and eternity, man and God. For the esthetic experience, like everything else temporal, lasts a moment and passes away. Perhaps it enriches the soul with a fuller natural capacity for further experience of the same order —but all such experience will end at death. Mystical prayer, on the contrary, enriches man a hundredfold more both in time and in eternity. It purifies the soul and loads it with supernatural merits, enlarging man's powers and capacities to absorb the infinite rivers of light which will one day be his beatitude. More than anything else it forms Christ in the soul. We become the sons of God, says Saint Thomas, (in Matth. v) in so far as we participate in the likeness of God's only-begotten and natural Son, Who is begotten Wisdom, *Sapientia genita.* And therefore by participating in the Gift of Wisdom man arrives at sonship of God. And Saint Bonaventure therefore adds that wisdom, (that is mystical contemplation) is the crowning of Christ's work in souls on earth. *Haec sapientia reddit hominem divinum et Christus venit hanc docere.* This wisdom makes man divine, and it is this that Christ came on earth to teach. (Coll. ii in Hexaemeron.)

The sacrifice of an art would seem small enough price to pay for this "pearl of great price." But there is a further complication, which we can only adumbrate, before closing this article. What if one is morally certain that God wills him to continue writing anyway? That is, what if one's religious superiors make it a matter of formal obedience to pursue one's art, for some special

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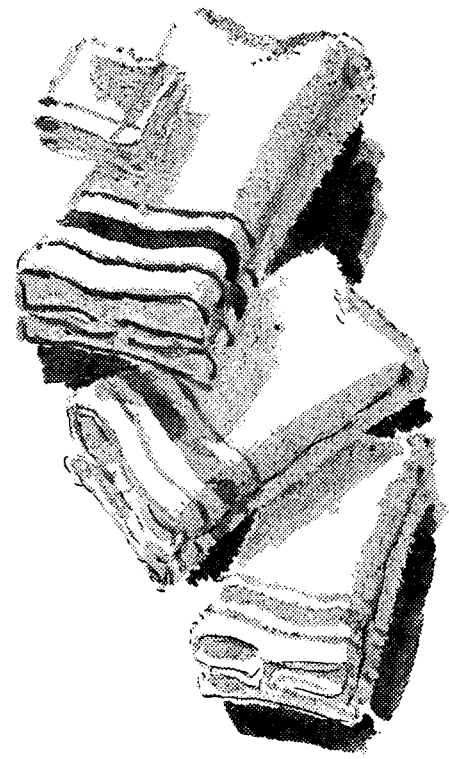

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purpose like the good of souls? That will not take away distractions, or make God abrogate the laws of the spiritual life. But we can console ourselves with Saint Thomas Aquinas that it is more meritorious to share the fruits of contemplation with others than it is merely to enjoy them ourselves. And certainly, when it comes to communicating some idea of the delights of contemplation, the poet is, of all men, the one who is least at a loss for a means to express what is essentially inexpressible.

The Stage & Screen

A Note on Experimental Theater, Inc.

OPERATION OF the professional theaters' own "Experimental Theater" began in February of this year, at the Princess Theater, with Theater Incorporated's production of "The Wanhope Building" by John Finch—the first in a series of five plays to be presented for five performances each to a membership audience. Behind this opening a most miraculous, and certainly ponderous, amount of organization had taken place. The American National Theater and Academy secured the theater and aided in setting up staffs and councils; an agreement was drawn between Actors Equity and the Dramatists Guild; large concessions were made by the vital unions; and a subscription price of $15.00 was offered the concerned public for the series of five plays. No commercial competition with Broadway was any way considered. The functioning of the theater was to depend upon a board drawn from Equity and Dramatist Guild members in combination with a Production Committee, both organs empowered to vote upon the works to be performed. All this was effected: it happened. Five plays opened, ran, closed. Critical disappointment was wide, which was not astonishing since, evidently, in the exhausting and (I repeat) heroic welter of finagling to be got through, no one had bothered to formulate any clear policy with regard to the theater's purpose. The crux of whatever loose policy there was seemed to be that anyone holding a new, unplayed, un-optioned script could produce it, using the services of ETI, provided he could get it accepted by the board and committee: an excellent, liberal, serious scheme. However, it was not until their fourth and only interesting offering (Arnold Sundgaard's "The Great Campaign") that the movers of ETI got round to defining their notion of "Experimental Theater" at all. This play's program carried, as well as the ordinary credits, a statement by Walter Prichard Eaton which I can only designate (with all due respect) as silly. For ETI Mr. Eaton discards, with an eye to production costs, any strict definition of "experimental"—i.e., "A theater where plays are produced which depart from the accepted conventions of playwriting or production methods." He finds that very few such plays exist in any case, and are generally the product of established men, who have no need of the assistance of such a theater. His "touchstone" for ETI would be "talent, artistic promise"; his choice of function, "a playhouse in which the untried dramatist can have a chance to see his work before an audience. . . ." I think it must be immediately apparent that what Mr. Eaton is describing will be any one of the hundreds of university, little, or tributary theaters honorably placed throughout the country and as honorably struggling to operate within the limits of his definition. He is certainly neither describing nor assisting the very first intelligent effort the professional theater has ever made to nourish itself in its struggle with the machine arts of Hollywood, Radio, and Television. It must be clearly understood that only so far as dramatic conventions *are* extended over and over again can the theater hope to point the differences between itself and these ulterior businesses. And to grow; and to achieve a dynamic. Mr. Eaton's objection that "strict experimentation" would necessitate procuring a playhouse "liberally equipped with mechanical devices and with a flexible stage" quite honestly does not seem currently applicable to me. Twenty-five years ago when all invention was concerned with design—the point at which most of Broadway has been stuck ever since—the objection would have been tenable. Nowadays, no. It seems to me that there are two creative forces at present seeking the possibility of statement on the stage. One will be the small lyric—a form which has been everywhere reconventionalizing itself and which is eminently suited to the smothered American poetic imagination. And the second, the psychological—a new form which will enable the instant, universal, inner anguish of Everyman to be wholly theatrically examined: a form in which retrospect and introspection are to be made dramatic. Neither of these two forces depend upon design and engineering; they depend only upon writing and wrighting. In respect of the first, a selection of the works of Lorca, Brecht, and certainly again Sundgaard, should be investigated; in respect of the second, the works of Anouilh, Armand Salacrou, possibly T. Williams, plus such an effort as the English Alan Turpin's adaptation of "The Turn of the Screw." These, in combination with any sequential, rather than retrogressive, American scripts which may be available. I think a series such as this would certainly mark ETI as a useful instrument, rather than merely a loyal, sentimental, organizational marvel. In the meantime, I should say this theater's purpose ought to read as simply as this: the production of any play, of any size, by anyone, the form of which will augment the possibilities of representing life on the stage. KAPPO PHELAN.

Come in Costume

THE IDEA seems to be that if you can give a film some beautiful clothes and settings you can get away with almost any kind of a story. But in the case of "The Private Affairs of Bel Ami," after the movie-goer has duly appreciated the handsome 1880 decor and costumes, and the musical score (composed and conducted by Darius Milhaud) he may get tired of De Maupassant's cynicism, which wears a little thin when stretched over so many reels. There really isn't much to this picture, although a good cast has been assembled to enact the story of a cad whose ideal is Punch and for whom women fall like a

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series of Judys knocked on the head. George Sanders has played this rôle so often that he can now walk through its paces without bothering very much to change his expression from love to contempt for his easy conquests. Among the pretty actresses whose paths Mr. Sanders crosses this time are Ann Dvorak, Susan Douglas and Marie Wilson; but the three I remember best are Frances Dee (because she plays the only one who turns him down), Angela Lansbury (because she's exceptionally beautiful even when her large eyes are filled with tears and she is making silly statements about his cruelty being dearer to her than the love of other men) and Katherine Emery (because she portrays a matron about whom our dubious hero says, "I lighted a fire in an old soot-filled chimney"). For the benefit of those who aren't likely to stay until Sanders finishes his amours, I must add that this last-named women is responsible for his death in a duel scene.

"Ivy" is also a period piece, an Edwardian affair which Producer Sam Wood has dressed and set very handsomely. However, its script by Charles Bennet has the advantage of being based on a novel by Marie Belloc Lowndes whose story is more adaptable for the screen. Not that Ivy herself is any more admirable than the De Maupassant scoundrel, but her machinations lend themselves to vivid cinema. "Poison Ivy" would be a better name for her, for she hardly shudders twice as she steals some deadly powder from the doctor (Patric Knowles) with whom she's finishing an affair, and drops it in lethal doses into her husband's brandy and soda. Although she still loves her husband (Richard Ney) who has no capacity for making money, she has her cap set for wealthier and classier game (Herbert Marshall). I don't think this is a great movie, but it's nice and unpleasant to watch Joan Fontain make this English Lucretia more beautiful to look at than to have a drink with; and the supporting cast, which includes Cedric Hardwicke, Sara Allgood and Lucile Watson, turn in performances which add to the credibility and suspense. Sam Wood has directed his production well.

For blasé moviegoers who still like to see actors in yesteryear's clothes, but are tired of murder and illicit love, there's "My Brother Talks to Horses," which goes to another extreme but should appeal to admirers of Saroyan or Barrie. Morton Thompson, who wrote the original story and the screenplay, knows how far to go with whimsy without becoming offensive, and Director Fred Zinnemann mixes enough realism with fancy to keep us from gagging at these events in Baltimore in 1909. Actress Spring Byington is a natural as the mother whose devotion to Yogi is somewhat cramped by her love for her two sons: the elder (Peter Lawford, who's inventing a crystal set) and the younger ("Butch" Jenkins) who actually carries on a conversation with horses—and seems to have an affinity with other animals too. As you see, this family is a bit odd; and what happens when they meet up with the real racing set (Edward Arnold, Charlie Ruggles) is quite amusing. You may or may not be pleased to learn that Master Jenkins loses his gift for talking to horses; but about this time he takes on a new interest: he notices girls for the first time in his young life.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

The American from Epsom

JOHN BRODERICK

I WAS LATE getting to Paddington that afternoon, and by the time I reached the track an attendant was already hurrying along the platform slamming the doors on the Oxford train. Just as the train began to move out of the station I found a compartment that wasn't full. There were three people in the compartment, all of them seated on the same side, facing in the direction the train was traveling. I knew they were regarding me with that brief hostility people in good order always turn on anyone who makes a mess of life by dropping packages in a crowd or by barely catching a train, so I kept my back to them and took a long time getting out of my trenchcoat and putting it, with my overseas cap and musette bag, on the rack overhead. When I turned and sat facing them I saw that the two shabby girls opposite me and the tall young man in the other corner weren't together.

Neither of the girls wore stockings and their legs had the mottled red-blue look I had come to associate with cheap bars and dirty tea rooms. One of the girls had her face pressed to the window, staring into the solid dripping fog. "A regular pea-souper," said her friend. The girl at the window snarled in disgust. "Ahhhh," she said.

The young man was slumped carelessly in the other corner; his coat was open and he had propped his feet on the seat across the aisle. I was embarrassed to find him staring at me, so I turned away, but as I did I noticed that the belt he was wearing was the kind of thing that had become stylish in the United States just before the war. It was a thin strip of leather stamped with a geometric pattern intended to be Indian or Mexican and finished off at the end opposite the buckle with some bright metal that looked like silver. I didn't glance his way again until the train slowed down for the approach to Didcot station.

The girls were on their feet long before the train stopped, waiting with a show of surly, impatient dignity

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while the young man slowly drew back his feet to let them pass. When they had gone he stood up, dropped the window, and leaned out to examine the wet, quiet station. He waited until the train was fully underway again before he pulled up the window. Then, instead of taking his seat in the corner, he moved to the place opposite me where the girls had been sitting.

"How many stops to Oxford?" he asked. I hesitated a moment because his accent had surprised me. When I told him that Oxford was the next stop one side of his face lifted slightly in a weary, tolerant smile. "You are probably thinking that I'm an American," he said, "but you are wrong, quite wrong. I'm English. However, I've just returned from your wonderful, wonderful country, so to simplify things I speak with an American accent when I'm with Americans, and when I'm with the English I speak with an English accent." He leaned back and closed his eyes for a moment, apparently reflecting on his strange accomplishment.

"I suppose," he said, opening his eyes and indicating with his thumb the bright plaid shirt he was wearing, "that in addition to my accent you thought I was an American because of this shirt." It was the kind of shirt normally worn by lumberjacks but often affected by American prep school and college boys. He seemed disappointed when I said I hadn't thought about it. "It's very American," he said, "Very."

I asked if he had been in America a long time. "Yes," he said, "I was with my father when he went out there on business just before the war and I stayed for six beautiful, beautiful years in the land—much as I despise epigrams—the land of the plastic girl in the plastic drugstore." One side of his face twitched briefly again in an expression of amusement and fatigue that hinted at a private knowledge of the world far beyond the pain of ordinary cynicism.

"And now the inevitable Oxford," he said, "I suppose you're up there?" I explained that I was at Oxford for the fall term only, one of the Army's post-war programs intended to keep us busy while we were waiting to be shipped home. "I was at Exeter in the States," he said, "You know—Phillips Exeter." In a low voice he sang a few lines that I took to be a dirty parody on an Exeter song. "Oxford is so unnecessary," he went on, "But my father insisted, so we cabled Magdalen about my entrance. But cables are never satisfactory, and now I've been compelled to make this tiresome journey to see them myself. From New York to Oxford by way of Epsom. I'm staying with friends at Epsom. You know Epsom—the downs, the derby." I said that I had been there. "But is Oxford so unnecessary after all?" he asked. "In your own Newport, for example, a degree from Oxford is sufficient entree to any drawing room or, I might say, to any bedroom." He lit a cigarette and blew the first puff of smoke toward the ceiling of the compartment.

"For you Newport may mean pleasant memories," he said generously, "But my lasting impression of that place is one of sadness. It was there I first learned about Roosevelt's death, or more precisely, about *how* he died. You know, of course." I nodded. "But I wonder if you do?" He raised his right hand and aimed the extended index finger at his temple. "I know you are surprised," he said, "That was my first reaction — surprise. Then I became angry. We were at a cocktail party and four of us dashed out and drove madly, madly to a library. They were getting ready to close the place but we shouted them down and demanded the newspapers for April. Well, it was quite true. *No one had ever seen the body.*"

He drew deeply on his cigarette. The speed of the train was dropping off, so I stood up to get my things from the baggage rack. "Still," he continued, "I admire the man in spite of that. But we must admit he was duped by the Russians. Last night I was at Claridge's with some friends of mine, some Life Guards. You know the Life Guards—very empiah and all that. They all agreed that we were through, absolutely through. One of them had just come back from Berlin. He saw quite a bit of the Russians there and one night he was with a group of Russian officers and they began talking about what had really happened to Hitler. One of the Russians had been drinking a good deal. *Mon cher,* he said to my friend. They were speaking French because the Russians didn't. . . . ."

"Ox-ford," the train announcer droned. . . . "Ox-ford. . . . This is Ox-ford."

I walked with him as far as the Randolph Hotel and pointed out the way to Magdalen from there. Before we parted he asked me what I thought would be the best way to approach the head tutor at Magdalen. He said he wanted to make a good impression. My answer was pretty vague, but he seemed to find it reassuring.

For the next day or so I thought about the young man a few times and wondered how he had been received at Magdalen. But when I didn't meet him anywhere or hear anything of him I soon forgot about our journey out from London together.

The term passed quickly, and in the middle of December I had word from my unit granting the Christmas leave I had requested. It was good news; I wasn't anxious to spend a garrison Christmas in Germany, and early in the term I had accepted a holiday invitation to Epsom on condition that my leave was granted. When the approval arrived I wrote to Epsom and said that I would come.

★

During that holiday most of the people in the house where I was staying in Epsom went out for a walk every afternoon and I had fallen in with their habit. But on the day before Christmas everyone had things to do and besides there was a fine rain falling, so I went walking alone. I took the way we had gone most often; up the hill to the track, across the fields beyond, and then back in a wide circle to Epsom. It was raining heavily when I reached the edge of town on my return, so I went into a tea room to wait out the rain.

The room was crowded, but I found a small table in a corner and sat down facing a large mirror. Sprigs of holly had been jammed behind the mirror at the top corners and the glass was spotted with bits of cotton to represent falling snow. I ordered tea and then looked between the spots of cotton at the reflections of the people seated behind me. The young man was the first person I noticed.

He was seated facing the mirror at a table on the other side of the room. A middle-aged man and woman were at the table with him, sitting in profile to the mirror, one on each side of the young man. They seemed strange company for him. The woman had on a stiff, cheap-looking dark raincoat, and the man was wearing a type of grey suit I had seen many times before: what the English called a 'demob' suit, issued by the govern-

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ment to discharged servicemen. The young man was dressed as he had been the last time I saw him, including the bright plaid shirt.

He seemed to be the only one talking, and as he talked one side of his face occasionally lifted in the tired smile that I remembered. The older man and woman listened silently, but most of the time they kept their attention on the tea things in front of them. They looked embarrassed and rather sad. During all the time I watched them the older man spoke only once, when he lifted a plate of cakes from the table and said something to the woman. She shook her head and he put the plate down again. A few minutes later they all left.

When the waitress came with my change I mentioned the people to her and pointed to the table where they had been sitting. I said I thought I'd seen the young man somewhere before. Oh yes, she said, she knew them; they were the Swinnertons. And it was quite possible that I'd seen the young man because he'd just come back from America. He'd been there all during the war. His father, Mr. Swinnerton—that was the man in the grey suit—was a groom here in Epsom. For years before the war he'd worked for a very wealthy American gentleman who brought horses over to race every year. Well, the American gentleman had taken quite a fancy to the Swinnerton boy and when it looked like there would be war he wrote and asked wouldn't the Swinnertons send the young chap over to America where he'd be safe. He was their only child and they hated to do it, but they did and he'd stayed out there until, well, until no more than two months ago. He came back at about the time his father was demobbed. Right after he came back she'd heard that the American gentleman was going to send young Swinnerton up to Oxford, but then someone had said he wasn't going after all. She didn't know what he would do now. Maybe he would work with his father. Six years was a long time, she said, and young Swinnerton had changed a lot. For one thing, he was much taller.

Books of the Week

The Hidden Damage. James Stern. Harcourt. $4.00.

BY some curious imaginative quirk, both the British and American Governments sent three men who were highly sensitive civilians, poets and writers into Germany immediately after victory. Stephen Spender went from England to "write reports on the attitude of mind of the German intellectuals" while from this side James Stern, author of two almost Marsyas-flayed books of short stories, traveled to Germany with the poet he calls Mervyn with orders to interview civilians on a sort of Gallup poll principle. All three were "raised" in England, and Mr. Stern's description of coming "home" to London and the West country is most moving because it is written casually, coolly, with neither the bragadoccio of Hemingway nor the willed simplicity of the Steinbeck school. More than 85 percent of a novel should be dialogue, say the pot-boiling pundits, and Mr. Stern's percentage is nearer 90. For someone who declares himself tone-deaf, he has the most amazing ear. Yet here is never deliberate soft-pedaling, nor are there any "set-pieces"—the whole, long, complete book is a miracle of understanding. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about it is that some departments of British and American bureaucracy should have been so inspired as to use Messrs. Spender and Stern. It is amazing how the two accounts tally. Mr. Spender describes Major P., after seeing SS men convicted of the most terrible torturing and attending their shooting, going through their possessions and finding sentimental and romantic descriptions of scenery. "Darling Mutti, the mountains are wonderful!" "Some of these murderers and robbers pressed flowers for their sweethearts." Mr. Stern watches the chambermaid at Nauheim, "with long blond hair done up in plaits round her head," and wonders if in "any country occupied by the Nazis or even in Great Britain there lives a girl today who looked as strong and healthy as this one. When the girl spoke, it was to say: 'Hamburg war schön—Hamburg was beautiful,' " and he adds, "not the remark itself, but the way she made it, the tone of voice . . . let fall with a sigh, in which the prevailing tone was undeniably a mixture of self-pity and sentimentality—characteristics I've learned to identify with cruelty." Both writers also report almost identical remarks made, in very different circumstances, by Polish DP's: "You are much too kind to these Germans."

This is so long and complete a book that is difficult to pry out any particular section for commendation. But the interview with Prince Fugger, the scene with the Negro grave-tender, and the quite extraordinarily funny scene in the cheese factory are each instances of conversation so artfully composed and recollected into literature, that the final effect is monolithic, as solid as three-dimensional form. This is an overpoweringly impressive book: the reader is stretched and peeled and harried until he cannot help, however suet-like or dumpling-minded he be, but begin dimly to sense the level of attentive pity, and of profound moral irony at which Mr. Stern operates. What Mr. Hersey did for the single bombing of Hiroshima, Mr. Stern has succeeded in doing for the whole aftermath of the German war and for the Allied occupation—nor could even Tolstoy have done it better.

ANNE FREMANTLE.

The Soviet Impact on the Western World. Edward Hallett Carr. Macmillan. $1.75.
The Year of Stalingrad. Alexander Werth. Knopf. $5.00.
Understanding the Russians. Edited by Bernard J. Stern and Samuel Smith. Noble. $2.75.

E. H. CARR is one of the most perceptive English students of modern Russian intellectual history, a fact which makes his booklet about the Soviet impact on the Western World the more disappointing. There are many interesting remarks and descriptions to be found in its six chapters, but what is lacking is a clear basic approach. At the same time, Carr delves too often into technical details—for instance in dealing with the monopoly of foreign trade, or the development of planning. His remarks on the general and historical importance of the Bolshevik régime are too vague: in the west there is too much emphasis on the individual, in the USSR, on society. I grant that it is perhaps too early to write a book on the Russian revolution and the West—but I think that, even now, more can be said than Carr says. Carr describes—not in a very clear way—the combination of Russian traditions and Western elements in the Soviet régime. How fascinating would it have been if he had tried to show the application and transformation of Marxism in the USSR! There is no discussion, in the chapter on democracy, on the decisive function of the one party in the

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Russian system; thus, the discussion remains unrealistic. No attempt is made to find out the features of the Soviet régime which have remained unchanged, and those which were radically altered. The chapter on international relations would have gained much by such analysis. The booklet makes a disquieting impression—it betrays uncertainty and helplessness. Or perhaps it is something else: the consequence of an endeavor to appear as objective as possible and therefore to avoid comparisons between reality and ideology in the USSR?

It is doubtful that Alexander Werth's witness story on Russia in the fateful months of 1942-1943 will find as many readers today as it would have found in 1944 or 1945. The tension with the USSR has pushed wartime memories into the background. This volume of the Anglo-Russian journalist contains reporting and observation at its best. Werth gives much material about the ups and downs of Russian moods before the decisive turn at Stalingrad. He frankly discusses tensions with England, the campaign for an early second front, the internal reforms in the Red Army, the anti-German hate propaganda. He describes, with the help of Russian military studies, the various phases of the battle for Stalingrad, though he does not claim to be a military specialist. The book will be of much use for future historians. Werth points out that we will know very little about the real determining factors of the events as long as protocols of meetings of the Politboard, of military councils, etc., are not published. The volume is much too repetitious and too long for the general reader. The 468 pages could easily have been reduced to 175 or 200 pages; decisive features are somewhat lost under a maze of details, digressions, casual observations, etc. Despite his inclination to avoid criticism of the USSR, Werth is a competent reporter who does not impose his interpretations on the reader.

A better title for "Understanding the Russians" would have been "The USSR Seen Through the Eyes of the Soviet Government." It contains a series of articles on various phases of life and policies in the USSR. Most of them are written either by representatives of the Soviet régime or by such well-known pro-Soviet propagandists as the Red Dean Hewlett Johnson; even those written by such men as Sumner Welles are purely descriptive and contain no criticism or critical interpretation of Soviet actions and institutions. According to this book there is no one-party rule in the USSR—the non-Communist parties "placed themselves beyond the pale." Religion enjoys perfect freedom. Only involuntarily does John Hazard admit the absence of personal security and freedom. He writes: "Inviolability of the person and the home is also guaranteed by the constitution. While this guarantee does not prevent agencies of the law from arresting an individual, or entering a home, it prevents an individual without training or experience from making an unauthorized arrest or search." I am afraid that I cannot see the use of such a slightly disguised propaganda volume. It may be useful to present an official self-interpretation on the Soviet Union—but then it would be advisable to quote exclusively from official speeches, books by Stalin, legal texts, articles from *Pravda, Isvestia, The Bolshevik,* etc.

WALDEMAR GURIAN.

Best World Short Stories. Edited by John Cournos and Sybil Norton. Appleton. $3.00.

FOR ONCE, this cantankerous reader is about seventy-five percent pleased with this new collection of short stories. They come from Argentina, China, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Peru, the Soviet Union and the USA. There is a generally high standard of writing, an unpretentious attitude, and an alive, often exciting attack.

It is not quite fair to judge a translated piece in the same light as a native product, so maybe Maurice Roelants' "Jazz Player" was not originally so outmodishly surrealistic and nebulous as it now appears. The Argentine Eduardo Mallea's "Cynthia" smacks of stale Chanel No. 5 and last night's champagne, and it is not a very convincing aftermath in any case. I do not see a great deal of purpose in including Thyra Samter Winslow's *bouquet fané* entitled "As the Fur Flies," or "Life Can Be So Sexy in a Beauty Parlor." But enough carping, the news is largely inspiriting.

I was much impressed with "The Mother," by Peru's Ciro Alegria, "The Golden Stallion" of Elizabeth Hardwick's, "Innocent Bystander" by Margaret Shedd, and Gloria Nuestadt Biggs's "The Cat." These stories are honest (oh rare virtue!) and show the essential knowledge of economy of phrase and an uncluttered sharpness of feeling.

Mr. Cournos and Miss Norton have been very brave in view of the insidious anthology mania prevalent on all sides. Their courage has been well rewarded; I felt sure I should be, too, after finishing their neat and thoughtful introduction. They have chosen writers who are story-tellers, not merely artists of the literary high-wire. By selecting pieces from different countries, they have made the reading public in this country aware of new and stimulating talent.

"However, it cannot be too strongly or too often stressed that a gift he (the writer) cannot do without is the gift of story-telling. . . ."

"To be sure, we are living through an age of readjustments in art as in life. A measure of experimentation is to be expected, and even welcomed; but a total disregard for the unities, for lucidity, for story-telling, is not to be countenanced."

The editors could easily have bathed the unsuspecting reader in blood-and-thunder, as do most of the short-story anthologists and literary *flâneurs.* But Mr. Cournos and Miss Norton have not traded good writing for popular sensationalism. "The Best World Short Stories 1947" is a generally worthwhile collection, garnered with care and excellent taste.

ELIZABETH JOHNSON.

Wilson: The Road to the White House. Arthur S. Link. Princeton. $5.00.

THE RADICAL turned conservative is familiar enough. That usual transformation is understandable and might even be socially harmless, if the return to the Tory family were not accompanied by a hardness of heart which passes for hard-headedness. The conservative turned radical is usually more profitable to society and far more interesting. His change often reveals a capacity for discovery and growth which enables him to pierce through the stereotypes of group relationships. Woodrow Wilson had that ability and his conversion from conventional liberalism to the new freedom is the subject of Link's excellent study.

The book is rich and original in content and almost invariably judicious. Link passes over Wilson's youth, for which Baker's biography is adequate. From his college days on Wilson looked to a career in politics, and his later study of law was intended as a preparation for political

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life. But there were too many Southerners with similar hopes and, upon the law failing him, Wilson turned to scholarship and teaching. Link's account of Wilson's writings is brief, and, though rather hostile in tone, useful. One hundred and thirty-five pages are devoted to Wilson's eight years as president of Princeton, and in them, for the first time, Wilson's educational achievements are fully described and placed in their proper setting. Wilson opposed both specialization in college and the vagaries of the free elective system. For the Princeton undergraduate he provided a general humanities course and the expensive preceptorial system, which made possible the close association of student and teacher. Later, he unsuccessfully attempted to reconstruct the social life of Princeton students. This failure was followed by a confusing fight over the location and administration of the Princeton graduate school. Wilson also lost that fight, partly because new endowments were made on conditions that undermined his authority. Oddly enough Wilson's controversies falsely assumed in his mind and elsewhere the character of a Progressive fight for democracy. In concluding this section, Link compares Wilson's presidency of Princeton and of the nation. In both capacities Wilson began with enormous enthusiasm and drive. Magnificent reforms were accomplished. In both cases Wilson drove too hard, broke with many friends, refused to delegate authority and become uncompromising. Link compares the stories to a Greek tragedy and his narrative justifies the comparison.

The author's explanation of Wilson's conversion to Progressivism is, in the nature of men, incomplete. He notes that by 1907 Wilson had accepted the Progressives' diagnoses of American ills. The first reaction of Wilson was to call for a new morality, but he soon came to recognize the necessity of the positive intervention of the state. As motive forces of this change he suggests both idealism and expediency. The bitterness of Wilson's Princeton controversies caused "an outpouring of his idealistic emotions." Moreover, Wilson had political ambitions and he recognized the political strength of the Progressives.

The remaining three hundred and fifty pages give an always lively account of Wilson's campaigns and his work as governor of New Jersey. M. A. FITZIMONS.

Concord: American Town. Townsend Scudder. Little. $5.00.

THIS is America's story, told in terms of Concord, Massachusetts, a town which played a leading role in the nation's history from the beginning up through the Civil War period. Professor Scudder sought a "more human approach. . . than is possible when the nation is dealt with as a whole," and he has very largely attained his aim by choosing Concord and funneling "the course of history through the personalities and actions of each of its generations, sought and found in the records." There is perhaps no other American town so well adapted to the purpose, but even historic Concord is not a satisfactory American microcosm after the Civil War. Perhaps that is why the latter part of the book is so much less satisfactory than the first half, which succeeds so well in bringing home to the reader the human meaning of history. Aside from an overemphasis on military history which may be assigned to the preoccupations of earlier historians and to the period in which this book was written, this is an admirable account of the American tradition which anyone interested in our past should enjoy. MASON WADE

Silver Fountains. Dorothy Mackinder. McMullen. $2.50.

"YOUR PEOPLE, M. le Curé, spend their lives working for God—some of them. But you don't seem to have got it into their heads that God is love, do you?" M. le Curé was unfortunately obliged to agree with the poacher. He remembered only too well the young girl who had jumped into the river the past winter, while the poacher was in gaol, to escape the tongues of the gossips. When whispers began to circulate about the beautiful young governess, engaged by M. Corday for his little girl, the Curé preached a sermon which branded so candidly the scandal-mongers and the author of the poison-pen letters that the leading citizens of Tourez went to complain to the Dean.

It was not that the Dean failed to endorse the ideals and the theology of the Curé but the Dean felt that the situation might have been handled more diplomatically and decided the Curé would do better in a larger town under the guidance of an older Pastor.

"But look, M. le Curé," said the poacher, "you mustn't leave Tourez looking on yourself as a failure. That's no compliment whatever to God Almighty. There may be two people or three in Tourez who've seen the mind of God since you came—that ought to be enough for you." One of them was the Governess.

This story of a French village doesn't sound very unusual, but it is—in the excellence of its workmanship. Although written by an Englishwoman, the French background is natural and Corday's old manor house of Recollet has a fragrance to its garden and a pleasing sense of repose in its ancient house with its rare china and books that is reminiscent of a skill in creating atmosphere that Galsworthy developed so successfully. "Silver Fountains" is just the book to take as a week-end gift—readable, agreeable and sound. E. V. R. WYATT.

I Speak for Thaddeus Stevens. Elsie Singmaster. Houghton. $3.50.

ALTHOUGH several of my graduate students in history have done considerable research in an effort to learn as much as possible about Thaddeus Stevens, few have been as sympathetic to him as Miss Singmaster has been. That fact does not by any means make them right and her wrong. Perhaps the general attitude of unfriendliness toward Stevens stems to some extent from "The Tragic Era" by Claude Bowers, a book which has had a wide reading public. In that book Stevens was certainly presented as a vindictive, frustrated individual. Bowers apparently believed that Stevens, more than any other man, prevented the adoption by Congress of a sane program of reconstruction in the period after the Civil War. Stevens seemed to typify the radical Republicans at their worst, and that was admittedly bad.

Miss Singmaster starts her book with the date April 4, 1792, and with the location, Vermont. She ends with the date August 11, 1868, and with the location, Washington, D. C. Between these two chapters, dealing with the birth and death of Thaddeus Stevens, there are forty-two other chapters, each headed by a date, and each dealing with an important event in the life of Stevens. Much emphasis is placed on his earlier years, years that were spent in a continual struggle against poverty. His devotion to his mother is etched clearly. His efforts to secure an education; his admission to the bar; his early years in Gettysburg; his growing interest in politics; his interest in the iron works near Lancaster; his adoption of the cause

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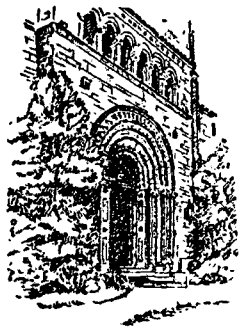

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of the Negro; his career in the House of Representatives; and last but far from least, his bitter and implacable opposition to the reconstruction measures proposed by President Johnson—these are some of the matters treated very effectively by the author.

It seems impossible not to develop a spirit of sympathy for Stevens. Miss Singmaster is completely convinced that Stevens was utterly sincere in all his undertakings; she sees nothing partisan in his conduct. She presents her point of view with the aid of much dialogue; she employs no footnotes but uses much direct quotation. The book may well influence the general opinion held concerning the man who so very profoundly influenced the reconstruction period.

PAUL KINIERY.

The Novel and the World's Dilemma. E. B. Burgum. Oxford. $3.75.

PITY the poor panacea-ist! Today his road is paved with more rainbow shreds than even the way to hell with good intentions. Revolutions, in spite of Shelley's pale egging, have shrunk from Robespierre to Russia: evolution, invented by Darwin, has been *eventré-d* by Einstein. Freud, it has been discovered, himself suffered sadly from a Messiah-complex. In fact, since Edith Cavell put patriotism in its place, we are left with democracy only for application as a general specific. And Mr. Burgum, who "has written widely on criticism for various periodicals" as his dust-cover tells, has naïvely hitched his shirt to this best and biggest of bandwagons.

He believes that "as society recovers from decadence, we shall have its record in the development of new forms . . . and in the restoration to our fiction of men resolute by a plausible trust in their common destiny." (Prepare for atomic war, warns President Truman; Pope Tells Cardinals of coming perils.) Through the discovery of an "authentic public truth" (the superior sanity and resoluteness of the common man) writers, according to Mr. Burgum's jubilant optimism, "while continuing to associate human worth with right action" will "desire to stay at the side of those they love and respect in a world that is to be loved and respected because we are all together in it, and to prefer its possibilities of warm contact and immediate activity to however pure a state of personal ecstasy that is bought at the price of isolation." There is a real and vital truth in the concluding words of this sentence, and Mr. Burgum's premises are to be preferred, as Anglo-Saxon attitudes, to the holier-than-thou gnosticism which, as Father D'Arcy has so magnificently pointed out in his "The Mind and Heart of Love," is perhaps the greatest heresy of our time. But, bracing spiritually as is Mr. Burgum's spiritual boyscoutism, it leads him to make some curious literary judgments. Only Thomas Mann, of the great names of our century, lives up to Mr. Burgum's *Weltanschauung,* and pays proper respect to the social necessities of man's nature; Malraux, who is commended for his many good moments, has, alas, traces of decadence, when, in spite of his naturally optimtistic sociology, he falls into a "psychological dichotomy." Proust, though gravely reproved for his pederasty, is praised for his gaiety: "the philosophy is forgotten in the pleasure of its proof." But it is poor Kafka who gets the worst wigging. "The process of his personal deterioration paralleled the degeneration of the society that produced him." His own "diseased personality" verges on the psychopathic; the only way to take him is to laugh; to see, for example, "The Burrow" as funny "is to alienate oneself from con-

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tamination." Mr. Burgum's conclusion is a real tonic. "We who are more happily situated than Kafka can draw from his novels the desolate pleasure that there too we should have gone if we had been unable to believe in the potentialities of democracy and the common man."

Another writer to draw Mr. Burgum's ire is Virginia Woolf. "Her experience both of living and writing seems to have been inadequate," he pronounces, scolding Huxley for losing the charm of style with which, at the beginning of his career, "he laid bare the sensitivities he now finds it necessary to defend." He notes, correctly enough, that Huxley has "shifted his aim from ecstatic union with God to the annihilation of desire." It would seem that Saroyan would be just the man for Mr. Burgum, but, unexpectedly, he gives him, too, a trouncing, and is really amusing in his finale: "The Human Comedy" provides, "a refuge from the responsibilities of maturity for the flabby fibered . . . we should not begrudge Saroyan his embarrassing niche in the fabric of our national history."

Had Mr. Burgum but read the encyclical defining the difference between the masses and the people, he might have saved himself many snap judgments. Kafka and Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, and Proust, each can cry,

> we dreamers, we derided,
> we mad, blind men who *see*

for they have in common the quality of being, each in his own way, infinitely more sensitive than the "common man" of their time, but also more sensitive *to* him, and incomparably more aware of time present, of the "only now" than their most supercilious critic. Compassion means suffering *with*, and only when a writer completes in his art the sufferings of his generation, and of all humanity (in the same way as Saint Paul claimed to complete in himself the Passion of Christ) can he become truly universal. And this integration of the world's agony with his own is absolutely essential for Steinbeck or Shakespeare. It is because we all build our burrows or fail to get imagined jobs at the castle, that Kafka speaks for each one of us; because even the most moronic of us has eaten his queen-cake, that Proust is immortal. Richard Wright, whose brave sagas of sectional discomfort are good documentaries, is, curiously, Mr. Burgum's white hope, but until Mr. Wright is wrenched out of his blackness by his pity, as Gertrude Stein was lifted out of her whiteness when writing of Melanctha, he will still be literary, she literature. A. F.

The Enchanted. Martin Flavin. Harper. $3.00.

SELDOM does an adult remember how a child feels, and seldom is that memory so vivid that it can stand the test of writing. But such is the case of Martin Flavin. In "The Enchanted" he has recaptured the whole rhythm of childhood, its peculiar relationship to the outer world, its timeless flow, its spontaneous and disarming reactions. Only, in this story childhood is decidedly on the side of tragedy. There is the theme: Seven displaced Spanish children in France are finally put, by mistake, on board a freighter going to the West Indies—only to be shipwrecked on a tropical island on which they live all alone for several years except for the company of an old negro who has become senile. Their life in France is grim enough. It does not seem that the poor seven children meet anyone who has, if not a heart, at least some good sense. But to me the saddest of all are the years on the island. It might have been made into that sort of thrilling ad-

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Next Week

OUR RECORD IN INDO-CHINA, by Henri Brenier, of the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, is a colorful and authoritative account of the French colony there. It challenges American readers to compare the solid economic, cultural, social and political accomplishments cited by the author with the trusteeship requirements in the United Nations charter. It substantiates the position of The Commonweal on this controversial question rather than that of George Sheldon, whose views on Viet Nam we also published.

FOUR MILLION FAMILIES, by Edward Skillin, Jr., tackles one of the biggest American domestic problems. It is widely admitted that under proper conditions the farm is ideal for family life, that rural areas actually are terribly deficient in housing, medical facilities, education, sanitation, and community life, that urban prosperity is dependent upon sustained purchasing power in the rural districts. But other considerations usually seem more pressing. However, there is a danger now that unless the right things are done the United States will have as dependents within five years (at the very time that heavy urban unemployment is growing) some 4,000,000 farm families who have been eased off the land.

Also comment of the week, news of the stage and screen, opinions of our readers and enlightening analyses of the latest books.

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venture much cherished by juvenile readers—seven children alone on a desert island. But far from it. Mr. Flavin's book is not for juvenile readers. And it is not so much because of the vicious or gruesome episodes as because of the presence, always, of the unseen, unnamed tragedy heavily underlying the children's lives without their ever knowing quite what is wrong. It is the absence, one might wish to say the void, of adults. And this much more than in a physical sense. There has been and there is in the life of these children a complete desertion on the part of the adult world. The adults failed them from the start, and they go on failing them, everywhere, up to this total spiritual abandonment on the island. The whole adult world has fizzled out. Even up to the fearful casual acceptance by the children that it is like that, not even suspecting that it might be different. They go on living as if the adult world, completely blotted out, had never existed. Still, within their own selves the adult realities will have to be faced some day as they grow older. Gil is the first one to find this out. He has no name for his unrest and his gradual yearning for ways other than children's ways. The other younger children do not understand him. They say he is enchanted. He is indeed and it is only through a lonely and savage battle that he emerges into manhood.

To me the seven Spanish children are like the symbol of all the children of the world we have shamefully failed. This very poetical story makes us vibrate to the millions of young reproachful voices of children whom we have not only failed to clothe and shelter materially, but whom we have left bereft of even the taste of hope.

CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP

Successful Part-Time Farming. Haydn S. Pearson. Whittlesey. $3.00.

THE uninitiated may be surprised at what factors should be emphasized in the purchase of a part-time farm: the importance of location on a hard road within short commuting distance of one's business in the city; how essential it is to buy a place with solid buildings on enough land, and on good land; the dependence of profit on selling from one's own roadside stand; "irrigation—major secret of big profits." But this is enough to indicate that Mr. Pearson's latest book presents the project from an extremely practical viewpoint. The latter sections of his highly competent book present "helpful pointers" on the various products for sale and home use. E. S.

CONTRIBUTORS

J. L. BENVENISTI is an English journalist and a regular contributor to this magazine.

Thomas MERTON is the author of "Man in the Divided Sea," and is a member of the Trappist Community at Gethsemani, Ky.

Waldemar GURIAN is the editor of *The Review of Politics*, and a member of the faculty of the University of Notre Dame.

Elizabeth JOHNSON has contributed to *Cornhill* and other British publications.

M. A. FITZSIMONS teaches history at the University of Notre Dame.

E. V. R. WYATT is drama critic for the *Catholic World*.

Paul KINIERY is assistant dean of the Graduate School at Loyola in Chicago.

Claire Huchet BISHOP is best known for her successful books for children.

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